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# **It Is Good for Me**

**#1319-A**

**Series: What the Word Says About the Word**



**DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.**  
**INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO**

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# It is Good for Me

*Precious heavenly Father, still our spirits, we pray. Quiet our hearts. Open our eyes that we might behold wondrous things out of Your Word. Teach us, heavenly Father. Reveal Your truth; explain your truth. Illuminate it, simplify it, and make it plain. Then, by your Grace, Father, may we leave this place determined to obey it, to Your glory.*

*We are not gathered here just for fellowship or even just for instruction. By Your grace, we are gathered here for transformation. We want to be changed into Your likeness. We ask, our Father, that You would speak to us in a very fresh and real way; that You would grant us wisdom and understanding that we might be more focused in our lives upon who You are, and more committed to the precious, priceless Word You have left us.*

*In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

I'm going to start by asking you a question. I know you're not going to answer, but I am going to ask. I want you to complete this sentence. The first part of the sentence is blank, and all I am asking you to do in your mind, is to fill in the blank.

“\_\_\_\_\_ is good for me.”

I've given you a few hints. Vitamins are good for me. Some of you agree; some of you don't. A balanced diet is good for me. You know what a balanced diet is? It's when you get the hamburger on the left and the French fries on the right and the plate is balanced. A balanced diet is good for me. Exercise is good for me. Rather, exercise is good for my friends. Friendships are good for me. Sleep is good for me. (But not until after class. Okay?)

Even in the spiritual realm, I think we can agree on certain things. What we have come up with so far are basically things that make our physical bodies or our physical existence, either last longer or be more comfortable. But in the spiritual realm we

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can translate it. Most of you would say:

Prayer is good for me.

Bible study is good for me.

Discipleship is good for me.

Church attendance is good for me.

You won't get much argument with any of those. Now, suppose I were to tell you that the Bible has an addition, an addendum, a very crucial ingredient to add to that. Would you say to me, "Tell me what it is and I'll want it?" No? Yes? Maybe? You would rather not say? Okay. Here it is in Psalm 119:71; another "good for me" phrase in the Bible.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn  
Your statutes. (Psalm 119:71 NKJV)

Afflicted? That's what it says. What's an affliction, then? Why is it good? Why does God feel that way? Why doesn't God bless me instead? Could an affliction be a blessing?

We are going to look at some key words and try to find the answer. We are continuing our walk through the somewhat dense but lush pathways that travel through Psalm 119. We are asking ourselves, what does the Word say about the Word? What does the Bible say about itself? We have been looking first at the atmosphere. How do we come to God when we are going to study His Word? What do we do first? We learned in our first few lessons, that what God expects of us whenever we open this Book, is two things from Isaiah 66:2. He wants us to be of a humble and contrite heart, so much so, that we tremble at His Word. We discovered this means to tremble with excitement that the God of eternity would speak directly to us.

Then we learned from Psalm 119:18, that God wants us to pray, "Lord, open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." We learned that those wondrous things are the wonderful ways that God reveals His character through the Scriptures.

We then realized that the psalmist in Psalm 119, began to say over and over, "O Lord, teach me. O Lord, teach me." What that appeared to have meant was, he wanted God to teach him the way Jesus taught the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount.

We found out that the teaching involved:

Revelation

Explanation

Illumination

Simplification

We then determined that having trembled at God's Word and having asked Him to open our eyes that we might behold wondrous truth, we then were to get busy about the business of giving God the time to speak to us through his Word on a regular basis. Remember what the psalmist said? "I have esteemed the Words of Your lips more than gold." Then He said, "More than fine gold." Then he said, "More than all the gold in the world." Then he said, "More than great spoils that you win on a battlefield." Then he said, "I love Your Word more than I love honey; more than the greatest delicacy I can put in my mouth." Then finally, we turned to the book of Job and we realized that what God is really looking for, is men and women who will esteem the Words of His mouth more than their necessary food<sup>1</sup>. This literally means, you would give up bread and water if you were starving, before you would give up time in this Book. And most of us looked at ourselves in disbelief because we won't miss a meal in order to get in this Book. Some of us won't miss a snack in order to get in this Book. Yet, we claim to be men and women of the Book!

So, we looked at the prelude to the Word. Now let's look at the partner to the Word. What is it that God does to make us hungry? We have already determined this is the attitude we are supposed to have, but most of us say, "Wait a minute. I'm not that hungry for the Scriptures. I mean, I enjoy coming to church. I don't even mind coming to Sunday school. I'll listen to the radio once in a while and have a quiet time, but this just isn't me." How can God create a hunger?

In this lesson, we are going to look at God's partner to the Word. It's a tool—He does have one. This is a tool He loves to use, not because He enjoys it, but because it works. It happens to be a tool, though, that we don't like. He uses the very thing that makes us weak; the thing that humiliates us; the thing that makes us fail. He brings pressures and problems and

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<sup>1</sup> Job 23:12

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persecutions into our lives to drive us to His Word, so He can bless us. How many of you would like to be blessed? How many of you pray for your friends to be blessed? “Lord, bless so and so.” Sure, you do. How many of you know what that means?

If you will look up Matthew 5, it says we are to be poor in spirit. It means we are asking God to take away from us that spirit of independence that causes us to not have a sense of our need for Him. So, when we ask God to bless us, one of the things we are asking Him to do is take away from us whatever it is that is making us independent. If He does that, He is blessing us. Do you still want to be blessed?

Secondly, God says He blesses us by making us meek. Meek men and women don't go around doing things for God. Meek men and women are those who have come to realize that only God can do things eternal. Moses found that out. It doesn't happen very fast. It takes both time and pain. And God is willing to give it the time and He is willing to let us endure the pain in order to bless us.

Do you still want to be blessed? Thirdly, Jesus said that mourners are blessed ones. Mourners have lost something or someone they thought they couldn't live without. When it's gone, they mourn. God knows that real blessings enter our lives when we have no one else and nothing else but Him. So, on occasion, He will bless us by taking from us, something or someone we thought we couldn't live without. The weight of our lives falls upon Him and He is blessing us.

Do you still want to be blessed? Sometimes, God blesses us, Jesus went on, by allowing us to be persecuted. To be persecuted is to be misunderstood, wrongfully accused, or taken advantage of for the Gospel's sake and for the glory of God. It isn't pleasant, but it is a blessing. And the Scriptures tell us, God allowed His own Son to be persecuted that we might enter into the fellowship of His sufferings. God loves us so much, that He'll do whatever it takes to afflict us in order to bless us. And we are to reach the place that when He does, we get excited and say with the psalmist,

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might  
learn Thy statutes [Word].” (Psalm 119:17 KJV)

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It's good. It really is!

Now why do we need to be afflicted to learn His Word? The psalmist answers the question for us. God makes it so simple.

Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.  
(Psalm 119:67 NKJV)

We are going to do some word studies, and we've looked at the word blessed, so the first word we are going to look at is astray. What does it mean to go astray? How many of you have gone astray? How many of you know someone who has gone astray? Astray—it's an unusual word. It doesn't necessarily mean a deliberate choice to do that which is evil. The word, astray is used mostly in the Old Testament to describe animals who have wandered off course and gotten in trouble.

Psalm 119:176 gives us an illustration.

I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant, For I do not forget Your commandments.

(Psalm 119:176 NKJV)

Lost sheep do what? They wander. They don't know what's best for them. As long as they stay close to the shepherd, they're safe. But sheep are dumb animals. They want to go their own way, even though the shepherd knows what is best for them. So, they follow their instincts instead of hearing his voice. They wander. If you were to stop and interview a lost sheep, and stick a microphone in front of him, he would probably say, "Baa, baa." And if you interpret that, what he is really saying is, "I didn't intend to get lost. I like the shepherd. I want to be near him, but there's some shade over there. And he was going this way and I just needed that shade." Or, "The shepherd was going this way, and I saw this plant, and how was I to know it was poisonous?" The problem is, instead of watching the shepherd and listening to his word, they just wander. They chart a different course. And before they know it, they can't hear his voice anymore. Oh, he's still calling to them. But they have wandered just far enough to be out of earshot. That's what it means to go astray. Now, they are still his sheep, and his voice is still calling to them, but they no longer have the benefit of his protection or his feeding or his healing. They went astray. They went their own way. Isaiah 53:6 defines it that way, doesn't it?

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All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; (Isaiah 53:6 NKJV)

We didn't just follow the shepherd. We went the way we wanted to go. But the Good Shepherd cares. That is why we read in Matthew 18:12-13, that Jesus looked at His disciples and said:

“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, [that's one one-hundredth of his flock] does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?

And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. (Matthew 18:12,13 NKJV)

That's God's response to sheep who go astray. His heart breaks. He cannot bear to see us wander off course. That's why He afflicts us. He loves us so much that He doesn't want us to wander. He'll even leave those in the flock who are close to His side, climb over the fences of sin and go through the valleys of apostasy, if need be, to find that one. He puts him over His shoulder and he loves him and brings him back to the sheepfold. And it says He has a praise gathering. He is so excited about this one sheep He found that had gone astray. And it's not because that sheep is more valuable than other sheep. It's because that sheep has been rescued from going astray.

Now the psalmist is saying to us, before God afflicted him, before God put pressure on him, before God allowed him to be chastened, he had this tendency to wander. He kept going astray. He wasn't mindful of the Shepherd's voice. He didn't keep his eye on the Shepherd's staff. But now, according to the psalmist, something has happened to him. He is a different person. God has afflicted him. Now, he's not so likely to go astray. That's why it is good that he was afflicted. Good indeed.

You say, “Wait a minute! I've been afflicted. It isn't good.” How many would vote that affliction feels good? Nobody. It's not supposed to feel good. Feeling good is not what Christianity is all about. I hope that doesn't disturb you. Let me give you an illustration. Let's suppose you have contracted a serious disease. Let's imagine it is a malignant tumor. That's not good. So, your physician says to you, “The tumor is operable, and it



is contained. All we need to do is perform surgery and you'll be okay."

You say, "Will I enjoy it?" He says, "No. It will be dreadfully painful, pitifully expensive, and incredibly difficult on your family. There will be trauma, pain, separation, and a long recuperation time. In fact, when you wake up from the surgery, you will wish you were dead and you'll never want to speak to me again." "Then why do it?" you argue. "It doesn't sound good." "Oh, no," the doctor says "it is good, because unless you allow me to operate, what will happen will be far, far worse. Long-term, this is good for you. It is a good thing to do."

Our friend, the Great Physician, who loves us so much more than the family doctor, knows what we need. And He knows that we will scream and kick and cry against the hospital bed. He knows we are going to drag our feet all the way to the operating room. But He is going to do it because it is good for Him to do so. It is in our best interest. He has to. That's why it's good. It isn't necessarily good to the senses, and it doesn't feel good, but it is good for what really ails us. And it is necessary if we are to be spiritually healed. That's why it is good for us to be afflicted.

So, our next key word is affliction. What does it mean? It's an interesting word in Scripture but then, all the words in Scripture are interesting. This one is particularly interesting to this study because as you look at what it means, you get a better understanding of why God does it. Affliction is allowed in your life from three sources. And sometimes we forget there are three sources to affliction.

1- Some affliction is self-inflicted. It's called sowing and reaping. We get afflicted because we go astray. And while we were astray, we got caught in some barbed wire and got cut up. It is not God's fault. He's going to use it to teach us and show us how much He loves us as He puts us on His shoulders and carries us home. But beloved, don't blame God for it. We did it. That's a hard phrase to say in this generation, isn't it? I did it.

2- The second cause of affliction is spiritual warfare. Satan goes to God the way he did with Job, knocks on the door and says, "God, what about ol' Mary. She just loves you because you give her everything she wants. What if you...?" And God says, "Okay, Satan. You can do this much, but that's all." So, Satan

is allowed to test us and bring into our lives certain things that would, from his perspective, destroy us. And God, in His omniscience, only gives Satan the freedom to do that. And while Satan thinks it will destroy us, God, in His omniscience, knows those things will bless us.

Satan will come to us the way he did to Eve in the garden. He'll say, "Hmmm. God didn't really say you couldn't do that, did He? What kind of legalistic God do you have?" And if you don't believe that, he comes along with the second lie he came to Eve with. He says, "Okay, maybe God did say it, but who is He to tell you what to do?" So, you listen to his voice; you listen to the voice of the stranger. And interestingly enough, once you do, he does his disappearing act, and he leaves you thinking you're going to curse God.

Satan is not really as bright as we give him credit for, because he never has figured out why God allows him to do these things. God is trying to bless us, and Satan, without the mind of God, cannot understand that. So, let's give Satan credit for the tempting, okay? But don't give Satan credit for the straying. That's a choice. Satan tempts; we choose. So that's the second cause of affliction.

3- Finally, there are times when God afflicts us because He loves us. It's not because we've strayed. He does it to bless us. The only way He can, is to bring into our lives things that will make us meek, mournful, merciful, and poor in spirit.

Whichever of the three sources, God allows it because He loves us and He is waiting anxiously for the affliction to come to its proper place. I Peter 5:10, is one of the neatest verses in the Bible. It says:

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself [pick you up] perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

(I Peter 5:10,11 NASB)

Now those two words together, "will, Himself" will make about a one-year study for you, if you want to just study that one passage. God's afflictions are always for a reason, and the

reason is to bless us.

That word affliction in Scripture, comes from a Hebrew word that is used over 200 times in the Old Testament. It is used to denote punishment, infliction of pain, or for almost any circumstance that puts an individual, a church body, or a group of people, in a situation of lowliness that forces them to become more humble. Let me give you some illustrations.

- 1- What one does to a captured enemy. We see this with Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 16:6.
- 2- What the lawless do to the defenseless in Exodus 2:22.
- 3- Pain inflicted to a group who are in bondage or captivity as we see in Psalms 105:18.
- 4- Physical pain that is introduced by war as we read in Numbers 24:24.
- 5- Self-inflicted pain accompanying repentance as we see in Psalms 119:107.

The interesting thing is, that in almost every passage of Scripture where the word affliction is used, it has to do with bringing someone or some group of people low, so they will be humble before God. He wants to bring man to the point where we tremble at the sound of His voice, and having trembled, we are in a position to be blessed through affliction.

So, we need affliction because we go astray, we wander, we drift, we move up against the thorns and barbed wires of sin. And before we realize it, we can't hear the Shepherd anymore. He wants to get us back where we need to be, so He will allow us to be afflicted because He wants to bless us. He wants to bless us so we will become merciful, meek, poor in spirit, and so forth.

I trust by now, you are beginning to understand that the basic thesis of this study is to come to understand that if we are going to be the men and women God wants us to be, we've got to be blessed. But blessing isn't changing physical circumstances in a physical world. Being blessed is arranging physical circumstances to benefit us spiritually, and change us into the likeness of Christ so that He can make us meek, poor in spirit, and so forth. In order to do that, we must be afflicted.

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And the word afflicted means to put pressure on. It means to be under a certain level of pressure until we are brought low. And as we are brought low, we see God for who He is.

Psalms 119, is our textbook for this study. I would like to take a few verses out of that Psalm, to understand what the psalmist was trying to capture when he spoke about this matter of affliction.

My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word. (Psalm 119:25 NASB)

My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me according to Your word. (Psalm 119:28 NASB)

My soul faints [languishes] for Your salvation, But I hope in Your word.

My eyes fail from searching Your word, saying, "When will You comfort me?" (Psalm 119:81,82 NKJV)

I cry out with my whole heart; Hear me, O LORD! I will keep Your statutes.

I cry out to You; Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies.

I rise before the dawning of the morning, And cry for help; I hope [wait] in Your word.

My eyes are awake [anticipate] through the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word. (Psalm 119:145-148 NKJV)

Consider my affliction and deliver [rescue] me, For I do not forget Your law. (Psalm 119:153 NKJV)

Let my cry come before You, O LORD; Give me understanding according to Your word. (Psalm 119:169 NKJV)

I trust you get the picture of what the psalmist is trying to communicate. The first thing you see is, he was desperate. He was crying for help. It wasn't because he scratched the fender on his chariot or someone at the office frowned at him. This guy was desperate. He was distraught. He was despondent. These were major crises. He said, "My soul cleaves to the dust." He said, "My soul weeps because of grief. My soul languishes for a deliverer." He said, "I cried with my whole heart. I get up before dawn and cry."

Now, let's look at two principles that come out of that one.

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1- In most of our lives, it takes major crises to get our attention. God has to do what it takes. For most of us, He has to get us to the place where the night seems long, the heavens seem to be silent, and where we may even doubt that God is listening or answering. He's listening, beloved. He may not be answering, because He is waiting for the perfect moment in our lives, where that desperation allows us to fall upon our faces before Him and receive the grace and the glory that He wants to give us.

2- The second thing we need to remember about the depths of the psalmist's despair is, He wasn't playing games with God anymore. I don't know about you, but I like to go before the Lord, put on my Sunday go to meeting face, and pretend that I don't really have a heart problem. I like to say to Him, "Lord, you're so wonderful. Your name is so wonderful. Your Word is so wonderful. Amen." And then I get up and say, "I can't believe God let this happen to me."

The point is, we haven't reached the point of desperation where we are being honest with God, and it takes me a long time. This guy had thrown away his hypocrite suit. He was being honest with God. He said, "Lord, it hurts. Lord, I get up in the middle of the night and cry. I don't even believe in crying, and I cry." He said, "Lord, I can't stand it!"

Secondly, having cried out to God—and this is the key point to this lesson—having cried out to God in the midst of his affliction, he understood, the only answer was going to come from the Word. My friends listen carefully, please. Until he contained the Word, and let the Word do its work, he was not going to be totally healed and totally benefit from the affliction that God put into his life. He could have worked up an emotional plea or some kind of experience, and he would have gotten temporary relief; that's what most of us do. But the enemy can imitate that and it doesn't last. My friend, there is only one place you're going to find lasting promises that sustain you in the midst of your affliction, and it is in this Book.

So often people will postpone saturating themselves with the Word because they don't feel like it and they don't really get the benefit of the affliction. Listen to what the psalmist was saying: "My soul cleaves to the dust. Revive me with Your Word." What

a memory verse. His soul wept. “Strengthen me according to Your Word.” His soul was languishing. “I wait for Your Word.” What did he do when he got up before the dawn, weeping? “I wait for Your Word.” Do you see the picture?

The solution is, that in the midst of your crisis, humble yourself before the God of eternity, get real and ask for help. Let Him know you are at the end of your rope. Be honest. Be sincere. But beloved, having done that, then you pour this Book into your life because that’s where the answers are. You won’t get them through circumstances. You can beg God to remove your circumstances, but you sure won’t learn.

Don’t you understand that the reason you were afflicted, was that you might learn His Word. As you become desperate and pray, He opens your eyes so you can behold things out of His law you never saw before. You ask Him to teach you. You ask Him to reveal His nature on every page. Suddenly, it begins to make sense. He is blessing you. He’s creating in you a heart of mercy; a heart that knows how to mourn; a heart that knows how to bless your enemies and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. He is wanting you to become meek and lowly of heart, and it’s working. And you say, “That’s good!”

No, it doesn’t feel good. But it is good. It is good the way God is good. His goodness is being transmitted and translated into your life through something known as affliction. Satan thinks he’s got you. And for a little while, you feel that way. But when you get desperate enough, you cry out to God. He opens His Word in a way you’ve never seen it before, and there leaps forth from its pages, living truth, depth, meaning, purpose, and comfort. Verses you have read before and memorized before suddenly come alive. Why? Because in your desperation, you cried out to God, and as you did so, the Word became alive. It becomes a living Book and a living Word speaking to you and comforting you. Now you know you need comfort. It’s strengthening you. Now you know you are weak. It’s giving you wisdom. Now you know you don’t have all the answers. That’s what God was waiting for. So, it is good for you that you were afflicted, because now, you are really learning His Word.

One of the best illustrations I have found in Scripture is Exodus 1. It is a living portrait of real life. The children of Israel

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were in bondage. Like us, they were in a physically unfriendly world, but spiritually, God was producing exactly what He wanted to. It reads like this:

And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation.

But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we;

come, let us deal shrewdly with them, so if they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."

Therefore they set taskmasters over them [here's our word] to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

Here is a great memory verse:

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.

(Exodus 1:6-13 NKJV)

The enemy was grieved. The children of Israel were prospering. Everything was going well. They were in a land dominated and controlled by the enemy, but they were fruitful nonetheless, and they were multiplying. They were powerful. What a time to be alive. What a time to be afflicted. They had experienced God's power and blessing, and the enemy hates that. The enemy was fearful of their testimony. So, he got permission, and unleashed an attack on God's children. He set taskmasters over them to increase their burden. He made their lives miserable. But isn't it interesting, that the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew?

That's the way God works. The more pressure God allowed the enemy to place on them, the more of His grace they needed. The more grace they needed, the more He provided. The more He provided, the more they flourished. It was good for them to be afflicted.

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So how do you approach God's Word in the midst of those trials? That's the next question. You expect wondrous things. There are at least two things you need to ask God for as you open His Word in the midst of an affliction. With those we will close.

Let's look at Psalm 119:76.

1- He wants you to ask for comfort.

...comfort me LORD, according to Your word...

(Psalm 119:76 NASB)

This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me.

(Psalm 119:50 NASB)

What is comfort? There is another key word. Let's define it. Comfort is the hand of God relieving you of burdens you cannot carry. That is why the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter. He is the one called alongside to carry your burdens for you. So, when you seek comfort from the Word of God, you are asking the Spirit of God to come alongside you and carry your burdens by speaking to you through His Word. It's not a feeling, it's a fact. And you appropriate it, not by some emotional experience, but by knowing in your mind and reckoning it to be so, that God is who He says He is, and His Word is what He says it is. According to I Peter 5:7, what He wants you to do is:

cast all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you

(I Peter 5:7 NKJV)

So, that's the first thing you pray for in the midst of affliction. As you open God's Word, you ask Him to expose you to truth you have never seen and you say, "Lord, comfort me through Your Word." The psalmist found that God could comfort Him, and He can comfort you.

2- He wants you to ask Him to be renewed.

I am afflicted very much; [I'm on the bottom of the ladder, LORD. Loose translation.] Revive me, [renew me] O LORD, according to Your word.

(Psalm 119:107 NKJV)

Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Your word.

(Psalm 119:154 NKJV)

My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.

(Psalm 119:25 NKJV)



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Renewal or revival then, is a returning to a closeness of fellowship you once had with God, or you need to have with God at a time when the sheep and the shepherd are separated by the straying of the sheep. It is seeking from the Word of God, reminders of days gone by when the Word was fresh and fellowship was sweet. That's why in verse 93, the psalmist says:

I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have given me life [revived me, renewed me].

(Psalm 119:93 NKJV)

Comfort, strength, renewal, redirection, encouragement, power—they are ours from the Word when we get desperate enough to cry out for His Word to be our comfort and our guide. Most of us, beloved, won't tremble at His Word until we have been afflicted. It shouldn't be that way, should it? But it is. And like Job, most of us, even when we are afflicted, will begin to squirm and argue, blame God, and blame man, before we will get to the place where we will admit that what is happening to us is good.

But it takes time—a lot of time. God's goal remember, is to humble us. Humbling doesn't come quickly. Sometimes we get desperate. Sometimes we get discouraged. Sometimes we get depressed. Sometimes we get frantic. Sometimes we say, "Lord, I can't take any more. I don't see any purpose to it." And we just cry out to God in our anger and in our confusion. That's all right, but, my friend, that is not enough. When you get to that stage of desperation, you cry out to God for help, so long as you open this Book, and say, "Oh, dear Lord, I am desperate. Open my eyes that I might behold wondrous things." My friend, then there will be purpose in your affliction and God will change your life. But if you just lash out and cry, it might make you feel better, but long-term, you won't be changed. What is going to change you? This Book. That's where your comfort comes from. That's where your renewal comes from, and that's why you lay this Book on your heart day and night, night and day.

You don't wait until affliction comes, becomes then, that's the last thing you feel like doing. You lay it on your heart so when affliction and pressure and difficulty come, the Holy Spirit calls up God's Word to your remembrance to renew you, and that's what changes you. We will talk about that in our next lesson. You must lay the Word on your heart as a reservoir for

the Spirit of God to bring to your remembrance.

In closing, let me ask you a very simple question. Where are you in your spiritual struggles? Are there any of you, who in recent days, have been going through the furnace of affliction? It takes so many forms. Do some of you think maybe God let His thermostat get stuck and He's forgotten how hot it is? Have you prayed and gotten no answers? Has the pressure kept building higher and higher, and the solutions seem further and further away? Does God seem to have abandoned you? In fact, have you ever wondered like Job—though you don't have to admit it—*God, are you fair?*

My friend, God is more than fair. He is perfect love. The very things you are complaining about, are tools He is using to bless you. In fact, He loves you so much, He has allowed you to suffer affliction. Maybe it is because you were going astray. Maybe it's because the Word had become boring, academic, impersonal. Your relationship with Him had become cold. You didn't see Him in the same light as before. In other words, before you were afflicted, you went astray. Maybe now, He is calling you back to His side and back to His Word in a way you have never experienced.

Maybe you haven't strayed. Maybe, like Job, you're just seeking more of God, and you've said, "Lord, whatever it takes." Oh, what a phrase. "Whatever it takes, I want to be conformed to Your image." But you forgot, the only way to get closer to His heart is to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings. So, God heard you and decided to bless you. He didn't bless you by giving you things that would make you forget Him. He blessed you by taking things from you so you would remember Him.

It's not what you thought, is it? He is making you sensitive, so you can become merciful. He is taking away your self-sufficiency, so you can be meek. What a loving God. Praise Him! And as you praise Him, lose yourself in His Word. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Let it become *more than your necessary food*. Let it become the place where you'll give up anything and everything but your time in the Book.

Don't you see? That's why you have been afflicted, that you might learn His Word. Was it good? You bet. Why was it good? Because it gave you God's perspective, and drew you back to

It is Good for Me

the place where you trembled at the sound of His voice. So, praise Him for every blow from the sword of the enemy. Praise Him for every seemingly undeserved difficulty He allows. Praise Him because in the midst of your tears, an ocean of love comes forth to greet you and you are found in the arms of Jesus with a sense of dependence you never had before. Now you will wait on His every word. Now you will tremble at His every command. Now you will find comfort in His every token of love. Was it good that you had been afflicted? Oh, beloved, indeed, it was. Indeed, it was. Let's pray.

*Our Father and our God, we want to be blessed, but unfortunately, we don't really think sometimes about being blessed the way You do. You want to bless us by making us like You. And even though You were a Son, You learned obedience by the things You suffered.*

*Help those of us, Father, who are passing through troubled waters, and have been under clouds of affliction or difficulty, to see the Son, Jesus Christ, break through. May we, in our desperation, be honest with You, and then, set aside the time necessary to get into the Book and get the Book into us.*

*It was necessary for us to be afflicted, that we might learn Your Word. Before we were afflicted, we had a tendency to wander, Father. Now, may we say with the psalmist, "Now that I have been afflicted, I keep Your Word."*

*We pray, heavenly Father, that You would give us Your perspective of life and that above all, we would place Your precious Word so high on our list of priorities, that we would begin to take in more and more of those precious Words from Your lips. And as we begin to live those Words, our lives will be transformed and we will be men and women like those of whom it was said, "These may be ignorant and unlearned men, but they have turned the world upside down." Dear God, may we do that.*

*In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

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